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Interview With Dan Patrick of ESPN Radio

November 4, 1999

Mr. Patrick. Mr. President?

The President. Yes?

Mr. Patrick. It's Dan Patrick with Rob Dibble.

The President. Hey, Dan. How are you?

Mr. Patrick. I'm great. I appreciate you calling in. I've been dancing a little bit, ad-libbing for an hour and a half, but I know you're a busy man. I just want you to know, I've been sweating. [Laughter]

The President. I'm sorry. I owe you one.

Mr. Patrick. You know what I could use, a hug right now is what I could use. [Laughter]

The President. If I could give you one of those, I'd do that, too.

Mr. Patrick. I asked the callers to give me some suggestions for you. And do I have to call you Mr. President? In all respect, it's a very personable show. Can I call you something that—

The President. Call me whatever you want.

Mr. Patrick. No, you tell me what to call you. I want it to be comfortable here, because, Mr. President, that puts me at a disadvantage, asking you sports questions. [Laughter]

The President. You don't have to call me anything. Just ask the question.

Mr. Patrick. All right. Could I call you Bill?

The President. You can call me whatever you want. It's fine with me.

Team Jerseys

Mr. Patrick. Okay. What are you doing with all those jerseys that you get when teams come to the White House?

The President. Believe it or not, I save them all because I'm such a big sports fan. And when I get out of here, I'm going to put them all together and decide whether to either display them or take turns wearing them. But I actually save them all.

Mr. Patrick. Have you put one on in the White House and maybe, you know, tossed a football or played basketball in them?

The President. Yes, I played—I shot a few baskets with a Kentucky jersey they gave me the other day, not very long ago.

President's Favorite Athletic Events

Mr. Patrick. Now, what's the one event you would want to go to that you haven't been to, sporting-wise?

The President. That I have never been to? I'd like to go to a Super Bowl, and I'd like to go to a college championship, now that the new football system is in.

Mr. Patrick. You haven't been to the Super Bowl?

The President. Never. I've watched a lot of them, but I've never been to one.

Mr. Patrick. You know what? You can come with ESPN this year; it's in Atlanta. I'd be more than happy—

The President. I've never been. You know, I have seen some great events. I went to the NCAA championship game in Arkansas, one in '94, and that's the only time I've ever been to that. And then I went to—I saw the women's World Cup finals this year when we beat China with the overtime, with the kickoff at the end, which was stunning. It was one of the most exciting athletic events I've ever seen in my life.

SportsCenter

Mr. Patrick. Set the scene in the White House when you're watching SportsCenter.

The President. When I'm watching it?

Mr. Patrick. Yes, like where are you and—

The President. Oh, all right. Well, I watch it all the time, you know. I'm either in the kitchen, where Hillary and I and Chelsea, when she's home, we have our meals in a very informal atmosphere in the kitchen when there's no one else there, or I'm upstairs in what's called the Solarium; it's up on the third floor, and it's a big kind of sunny room. And I watch TV there at night, especially when my brother-in-law or someone else is staying with us.

Normally, I'm watching SportsCenter either around dinnertime when I come in or

late at night when I come in from an event and I'm sitting, visiting with other people.

Mr. Patrick. Have I said anything stupid on SportsCenter that maybe you wanted to criticize or critique me? Because you can—you get critiqued all the time. Feel free, you can take a shot at me.

The President. No, I don't think so. I think as long as I'm in office, I should be criticized but not return the favor. [Laughter] Everybody in America gets to criticize the President. That's part of the privilege of being a citizen.

Athletic Organizations' Community Involvement

Mr. Patrick. The President of the United States, joining us on the Dan Patrick Show here on ESPN Radio. You're a part of this new markets incentives. I know you're in New Jersey. The Nets are donating to the city of Newark, which I think is great. Do you see teams that don't give back to the community enough? The taxpayers build these stadiums, and maybe they don't get something in return for promoting and supporting their teams.

The President. Well, let me put it in more positive terms with regard to the Nets. I think that taxpayers finance these things because they enjoy having professional teams in their communities, because they believe it brings their communities some prestige, and because they think it generates a lot of other economic activity. But I think that the opportunity for a professional sports team to give something back to the community on a scale far greater than anything that's happened so far is embodied by what the Nets are doing.

I mean, this is a stunning thing that Lew Katz and Ray Chambers are doing with the Nets. And now, you know, they're partners with the Yankees, and so they've got a smaller percentage of the overall joint operations are going into community operations not only in Newark, New Jersey, but also in the Bronx, where the Yankees are.

I just think it's amazing. Here are these two guys that have made a lot of money, and they're going to dedicate almost 40 percent of the profits of this sports franchise to redeveloping the economy and developing the

lives of the children of Newark. I think that is an amazing thing.

Mr. Patrick. I think it's great. I think it's great. But I'm worried—we finance these stadiums. Should taxpayers finance the stadiums if we don't have any say on when those teams can leave?

The President. The practical answer to that is that stadiums cannot be financed unless the political leaders support it. And so the political leaders should decide on the front end, I guess, what they expect out of the teams in return for financing the stadium.

You know, it was interesting when Bob Lanier was mayor of Houston—one of the most popular mayors Houston ever had and a very able man—he let the football team go to Tennessee because he didn't want to finance a new stadium. So it's not like—nobody makes these communities do these things. They make their decisions. And I think if they think there ought to be some conditions or some requirements, that ought to be discussed with the owners in advance.

PGA Golfer Casey Martin

Mr. Patrick. We are going to have Casey Martin on in a little bit.

The President. Good for you.

Mr. Patrick. But you being the avid golfer that you are, do you think that having a golf cart is that much of an advantage in—I mean, the outcry over Casey Martin using a golf cart—did it surprise you? And where do you stand on that issue?

The President. I'm for him. I'm solidly behind him. I think he ought to be able to play. The only way it would be an advantage to him, in my view, is if he really didn't have the debilitating condition in his legs that he has. So I think that to me, this is like the golf version of the Americans with Disabilities Act, you know, where we try to make the workplace accessible with people with disabilities who are otherwise just as good at work as all the rest of us.

Well, Casey is just as good at golf and better than most of the rest of us, and he's got this condition, which will probably shorten his career, anyway. And so I think that the proper course is to say, "Look, we can't let everybody start running around the golf course. We don't want to change the nature

of the game, but this man has a unique disability which prohibits his walking around but doesn't prevent him from being a terrific golfer, and for however many years he can be competitive, we think we ought to give him a chance." That's what I think the rule ought to be.

Mr. Patrick. I agree with you, and I just thought that it was interesting, the outcry from everybody.

The President. What they're worried about, I think, is all the people who have to be the keepers of the tradition of any game or any club or anything else, they're always afraid that when they change any rules, it's a slippery slope, and pretty soon the whole character of a contest will be altered in ways that aren't good. But I just don't think that that objection holds water here.

I don't know Casey Martin. I've had some limited contact with him, but he seems like a terrific young man. He's bound to be a courageous young man. He could have folded his tent in the face of his physical disability. He could have sat around feeling sorry for himself. And instead, he shows up every day, and he's obviously got a lot of courage. And I think that we ought to support that. I think that's in the finest tradition of the sport.

So to me, it's not a difficult question. But I sympathize with the people who have the responsibility of preserving the traditions and the heritage of the game. I sympathize with them, but I just think all this resistance has been wrong. I think it's the right thing to do to let him get out there.

Greatest 20th Century Athlete

Mr. Patrick. Can I ask you one final question, aside from the question I just asked you?

The President. Sure.

Mr. Patrick. Who is the number one athlete of all time, in your mind? The Sports Century countdown of the top 50 athletes—who would you vote for number one?

The President. Ooh.

Mr. Patrick. Now, I know you released kind of a top 10—maybe it was a top 5—but if you were going to single out one athlete, who would it be?

The President. I believe the athlete in the 20th century that made the most important

contribution was Jesse Owens, because he won the multiple Olympic gold medals in the face of Nazi Germany and against Hitler's racial theories. So I think he was both a great athlete who had to show an extraordinary amount of personal courage, and he did something that was of profound significance at the time.

I think the most talented—physically talented athlete that I ever saw play, I think it would be a toss-up for me between Michael Jordan and Willie Mays.

Mr. Patrick. See, it's hard to go wrong. Once you get up to that stratosphere, then if you pick out somebody and—I always thought Jackie Robinson, to me, signified greatness as an athlete and what he overcame.

The President. Yes. Well, let me say, if you asked me who I thought made the greatest contribution to baseball, I'd have to say Jackie Robinson because he broke the color line and because he did it in a way—because he was a great player who was also a great human being. There's almost no way to go wrong here, but if you asked me who I think was the most—had the most stunning athletic attributes in my lifetime, I would have to say Jordan and Mays are the ones that I've physically witnessed. If you ask me—and I think Jackie Robinson, what he did was important. But I guess I would have to say the reason I picked Jesse Owens is because he did it up against Hitler.

Mr. Patrick. Mr. President, thank you for taking time out of your busy day. And you know, you're always welcome to talk sports on here.

The President. I love it. I loved talking to you, and I hope that more of our sports teams will follow the lead of the New Jersey Nets. What they have done is a great thing, and they're giving a lot of kids a chance at a better future.

Jayson Williams

Mr. Patrick. Well, we have the Nets' Jayson Williams. He's on hold. I think you met him today, but Jayson will—

The President. Oh, I know him. He is a terrific young man, and he's going to be well enough to play soon. But it's not going to stop him from spending some of his time

trying to give these kids a better future, and I hope more people will follow his lead, too.

Mr. Patrick. Mr. President, thank you, and we'll see you. Even when you're out of office, you want to talk sports, you're always welcome, okay?

The President. Thank you.

Mr. Patrick. I don't want you to feel like, that you're being neglected once you're out. You're still welcome here.

The President. You've got a deal.

Mr. Patrick. All right. Thank you.

The President. Bye.

NOTE: The President spoke by telephone at approximately 2:23 p.m. from the Malcolm X Shabazz High School in Newark, New Jersey. In his remarks, the President referred to Lewis Katz and Ray Chambers, co-owners, NBA New Jersey Nets; Michael Jordan, former player, NBA Chicago Bulls; Willie Mays, member, Baseball Hall of Fame; and Jayson Williams, player, NBA New Jersey Nets. Rob Dibble is co-anchor to Mr. Patrick.

Remarks to the North End Community in Hartford, Connecticut November 4, 1999

Thank you very much, first, to you Dick Huber, for being such a faithful member of our new markets team. You started out with us in Atlanta; you made the trip to Appalachia and to the Delta and other places; and you led me home to Hartford today for you. You know, the first time we were talking about this—I should say this about Dick; he talks about how cynical he is. That's a front. I'm a politician; I recognize a front when I see one. *[Laughter]*

He said, "You know, I'm not sure I'm happy about you taking all these other businessmen on this new markets tour. It looks to me like there's a great business opportunity here, and I hate for everybody else to find it before I do." And I want to come back to that, but I thank you.

I thank my longtime friend the president of Trinity College, Evan Dobelle, and Heidi Miller from the Citigroup. And thank you, Robert Fiondella and all the other business leaders that are here. Thank you, Governor. Thank you, Congressman, and also Congressman Kanjorski, who has been a faithful mem-

ber of all of our tours. I thank Speaker Lyons and Senator Sullivan and all the other leaders who are here.

I want to say another word—I'm particularly glad to be in Hartford with Congressman Larson, because he's been after me to come here as well. And Secretary Slater, thank you for making all these trips. And Reverend Jackson, thank you for being such an inspiration for all of these efforts.

I want to thank the Collective founders, Jackie and Dollie McLean. I thought of giving up my speaking time and letting Jackie play. *[Laughter]* And I appreciate the "Hail To The Chief" with the saxophone. And I just heard the jazz band upstairs; they played an old Sonny Stipp tune that I knew back when I was a young man. I don't believe I'm good enough to play it anymore, but I was astonished at the musical quality of the people here. And it's a great gift to your community.

Today you're hearing in words rather than music, another sort of serenade for the people of this city. The corporate leaders together are pledging—listen to this—well over \$200 million to the future of Hartford. That's one of the most impressive commitments in any city to developing the market potential of people who have not been part of our prosperity anywhere in the United States of America. And you should applaud them, support them, and be very proud of them. *[Applause]*

They're all saying, "Hartford is our home; Hartford is worth working for, worth fighting for, worth believing in." And we are committed to working with you to succeed.

Today's announcements are just the latest sign of the renaissance of this city. Before I came here to the Artists Collective, I had a chance to meet some of the vendors at El Mercado, the Latino marketplace on Park Street. I actually had visited there in 1992, and I remarked, first of all, how excited I was to go back. I had a wonderful time there in '92. At the time I was battling with my weight, and they made it worse. *[Laughter]* I never wanted to leave any of the places. And I loved being back there today. And as far as I could see, everything was better than it was in '92, except for one thing. There was this picture of me when I was there in '92,